

Testimony to the Legislative Appropriations Committee on February 16, 2010 regarding Charter School Funding delivered by Common Ground High School student Alicia Nixon

To Honorable Chair Toni Harp and the Members of the Appropriations Committee:

My name is Alicia Nixon and I am a sophomore at a public charter school in New Haven, Connecticut. I am concerned about the funding that charter schools get relative to other high schools. I attend Common Ground High School (CGHS), and I would like to see my school get funding equal to that of other high schools in New Haven.

Common Ground has succeeded at making students' academic levels their number one priority, helping each child individually to do his or her best. My high school is the only high school in the state of Connecticut that has exited the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Schools in Need of Improvement list in the past two years. Our students have worked very hard on academics and have doubled their test scores on the CAPT. More than 90% of our seniors are accepted into college, including Colgate University, Hampshire College, Morehouse University, the University of Connecticut and others. All of our seniors graduate with a solid post-high school plan.

Common Ground has a unique mission—it is the only charter school in Connecticut that focuses on the environment. Common Ground students are thoughtful about the environment. They learn that you cannot just use and abuse the earth's resources. They study Algebra 2 and Shakespeare, and also learn how to grow organic vegetables and how to make and use compost. Common Ground creates student leaders who give back through community service – helping out our elders in the community, cleaning up parks, and teaching younger students to reduce, reuse, recycle. Our student leaders have helped our high school to make many positive environmental changes. We want to be able to make that kind of transformation happen in our community.

Common Ground is a high achieving high school with inadequate funding. If our school were better funded there is no telling what we could achieve. Our education should mean a lot to you--all students who attend any high school in Connecticut should have the benefits of equitable school funding. If No Child is to be Left Behind why are we not receiving funding comparable to Wilbur Cross or James Hillhouse High Schools?

I thank you for your time and attention.